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# Is the Barber an Artist?



... BY THE AUTHOR OF ...

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“The Wise Barber in Clyde,”  
“To Shave or Not to Shave,”  
Etc., Etc.

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## IS THE BARBER AN ARTIST?



VERY little while some would-be humorist speaks of the barber as a "Tonsorial Artist," of his establishment as an "Art Parlor" or an "Artists' Studio," and at times he varies his jokes (?) by calling him a "Professor" or "Sculptor," etc.

We appreciate humorous articles, respect all descent comic journals and enjoy a good joke, even if at our expense, but we protest against stale jokes by would-be "Bill Nyes" who, from sheer ignorance of their subject, aim to speak sarcastically and in derision of the barber, when with a poor attempt at wit they ironically bestow on him epithets, which may be seriously applied to him, with all due respect for his profession.

In all occupations there are members with various degrees of skill to be found, and the saying: "Poets are born, not made," holds good also to some extent with barbers, for some show a talent and aptitude for their work far superior to others, but all barbers who, by diligent efforts, have achieved a certain degree of proficiency in their occupation, merit the respect due to the highest profession.

That there are a few dissolute and reckless individuals to be found in that profession, is unfortunately not to be denied, as is even the case with painters, sculptors, musicians and all other members of artistic professions, but the per cent is fortunately small, for, as a rule they are an intelligent, manly

class, who generally aim to cultivate the mind, make intellectual researches whenever their time permits it, study hard and are a credit to their profession. But are they artists?

Let us consult various authorities on the term "Artist," to see where the barber's profession belongs: Webster says of Art that it is from the Latin "ARS," artis, and was probably contracted from the root Welsh "Cert," Irish "Ceard."

(1) The radical sense is strength, from stretching, straining, the primary sense of strength and power and hence of skill.

(2) Cunning; skill.

(3) A system of rules, serving to facilitate the performance of certain actions; opposed to science, or to speculative principles; as the art of building or engraving. Arts are divided into useful or mechanic, and liberal or polite. The mechanic arts are those in which the hands and body are more concerned than the mind, as in making clothes and utensils. These arts are called trades. The liberal or polite arts are those in which the mind or imagination is chiefly concerned, as poetry, music, and painting.

(4) Business or employment, as, the various arts of life.

(5) Skill, dexterity, or the power of performing certain actions, acquired by experience, study, or observations; as, a man has the art of managing his business to advantage.

Worcester's definition of "Art" is: Practical skill; a trade; artifice. Bacon says: "Art is the disposition or modification of things by human skill, to answer the purpose intended." In this sense art stands opposed to nature. So much for the definition of art. Now for the meaning of artist. Zell defines an artist as one who is skilled in the exercise of any of the liberal arts, such as painting,

sculpture, music, etc.; the professor of any liberal or mechanical art. The term is especially applied to those who follow painting and sculpture as a profession; the other arts being commonly designated by a term taken from the art to which they are devoted; as a musician, a literateur, etc. By Paracelsus it is used to signify a chemist or rather alchemist. In an extended sense, the term artist is frequently applied to a person skilled in any art, as a hair dresser, etc. In this case, artist is commonly written with the French spelling, "artiste." Dryden defines the term artist: "In a general sense, one who is skilled in the practice of some art."

Elmer says: "The term is particularly applied to painters, sculptors, engravers, and architects."

Thus it would seem at first thought that the barber could be termed an artist only in an extended sense, and this would be spelled "artiste." In a general sense, according to Dryden, we see that anyone who is skilled in the practice of some art is an artist; and since Webster classifies art as either the "useful or mechanic," or "liberal and polite," and says that the liberal or polite arts are: "poetry, music and painting;" the barber would at a superficial glance seem not to be classed with these artists.

Edmund Burke, in his "Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful," says: "Art can never give the rules that make an art." It follows then, that we can not take mere definitions for this, but must discover by comparisons. Let us, therefore, make careful comparisons between the barber's occupation and that of the portrait painter, sculptor, or designer.

Pope, in his "Essay on Criticism," says:

"One science only will one genius fit;  
So vast is art, so narrow human wit."



And with this idea of the vastness of art all will agree who give the subject a careful thought, and will be easily convinced, that there are designers who do not merely reproduce their ideas on canvass or carve them in stone. If we admit with Pope, the narrowness of human wit as compared with art, we must acknowledge also the vast field occupied by art ; hence should concede that art is not confined merely to painters, sculptors and musicians, and that if the sculptor or painter can be, not only equaled, but outdone by any profession, the members of that profession must also be truly entitled to the term artists.

The sculptor conceives an idea, but to develop this idea, to give it tangibility, he must have a model to copy after ; if he has a talent for bringing this idea into existence, and is fortunate in finding the proper model, he may develop an excellent statue. This is science, taste, genius ; but after all, the statue does not live.

If the sculptor could call the block of stone into life by shaping it and chiseling at it, how much more wonderful this would be. Or, if he could even conceive an idea in his brain and give it shape, could produce this idea in stone or clay, without a model to work by, would he not achieve still greater renown? Still more so, if the sculptor could take a living subject and change its appearance from a crude, unsightly looking object, to one of attraction, would this not far outdo the sculptor of stone or moulder of clay? And would a person of such achievements be less an artist than the sculptor or painter? The portrait painter takes a piece of canvas, some paints and brushes, and with a special aptitude, careful selection of colors and shading, and with a good model to copy from, or work by, produces a counterfeit image which all but lives ! But, like the sculptor's work, it too stops at that.



If he could do this with objects that live, could he not achieve far greater renown, and would he be less an artist than the mere reproducer of objects on canvas?

It is clear, then, that any one capable of operating on living subjects and achieving results almost, if not quite, as startling as the sculptor's or painter's, must be fully as much entitled to be termed an artist as they are, if not more so; for his occupation, besides being fully as artistic, is undoubtedly more useful. We shall now call out: Next!!! And as it is the barber's turn, let us see what claim he has to being an artist.

An old saying has it that nature harmonizes everything, giving every man the correct color of hair, eyes, etc., and in fact all that best suits him, and that any attempt to improve in this on nature must fail. On remarking this to a Mr. Tufts in New York, who was having his hair and beard dyed, he replied: "Then nature must have intended me for a zebra or spotted leopard, for my hair and beard usually come out in three or four colors and only the work of the barber's art can overcome the gifts of nature in my case sufficiently well to make me appear human." And, strange to say, when nature was left to look after his hair and beard, they soon grew to make him appear a perfect oddity and a fright, yet when his barber operated on him for a short time, he looked quite handsome and intellectual. Here begins our claim for the barber as an artist.

Who can not recall to his mind some instance of a remarkable transformation where the work of the barber or hair-dresser so completely improved the looks of some one that the work gave evidence of a skill that only an artist can have? Most of us have read the story told of the late P. T. Barnum,

who stepped into a barber's shop, found a long row of persons waiting, and being in great haste offered to the man whose turn was next, and who happened to be a son of Erin, with strawberry blonde hair, to pay his turn if he would let him take his place. This offer was accepted and Pat had to take his turn to be served after the last man then in the shop. While the bill sent to Mr. Barnum for Pat's turn was over three dollars, it seems it was quite well worth it, for it was said it completely changed Pat so that his wife scarcely knew him, and all this was accomplished by the barber's art.

Young says: "The course of nature is the art of God." Since, then, the barber can seemingly change the course of nature, is he not truly an artist? For, although Shakespeare, in *Macbeth*, says: "There is no art to find the mind's construction in the face," yet the barber with his art can put an excellent construction on some otherwise homely faces. The barber places his subject in the chair, he has no model to work by, has only his artistic skill and taste to aid him, and frequently takes an awkward, untidy looking individual and so shapes his beard and hair that he makes an intelligent and refined looking man of him, and this is a subject that actually lives, no clay or stone, no mere colors on canvas in imitation of a living being. Can any professional skill do more?

Shakespeare says: "The art of our necessities is strange that can make vile things precious." What, then, would he call the barber's performance when he makes homely men attractive? Surely, Shakespeare would pronounce him an artist. There is, to sum it up, this difference between the sculptor or portrait painter, and the barber: The former takes a crude block of stone or color and brushes, and with the aid of a model to work by and to copy after, produces an excellent

image of a living being, while the latter takes an uncouth living being and evolves out of his mind a plan, by which to beautify this living subject, without a model to copy after.

Irving says: "In America, literature and the elegant arts must grow up side by side with the coarser plants of daily necessity," And one of the elegant arts is surely cultivated by the barber, whose mission is to beautify and refine humanity; and this art has become, with us, a daily necessity. This is why we claim that the barber is an artist in the strict meaning of the word, and that we can say of the would-be humorist with the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson:

"He builded better than he knew;  
The conscious stone to beauty grew."

The barber need not mind the sarcastic remarks; they can not detract from his respectable calling, nor does he want any flattery, for he does not need it; but he may well request, with the words of Shakespeare's Othello:

"Speak of me as I am;  
Nothing extenuate,  
Nor set down aught in malice."



## THE BARBER'S AUXILIARY.

Ordinary work may be done with ordinary tools, but for skilled work the best tools to be had are most desirable, and as the barber's time is valuable, it is poor economy on his part to buy inferior razors or shears ; the best are always the cheapest, and for this reason he should see that the name "August Kern" and the words "Blue Steel" appear on all razors and shears he uses.

Thomas Gibbons says :

"That man may last, but never lives,  
Who much receives, but nothing gives ;  
Whom none can love, whom none can thank,  
Creation's blot, creation's blank."

But who would be such a man? Surely every man would rather merit and receive the thanks of some one than to be disliked by all. Even if it paid just as well to be disagreeable as to be obliging, who is there that would not rather see his customers go away pleased than dissatisfied, even if he knew they were compelled to return? But business is so transacted, at the close of this nineteenth century, that customers do not have to go where they are not treated in the most agreeable manner ; they can select the most accommodating places, and therefore it pays to be agreeable, and to do all in our power to make business transactions mutually pleasant, even if it costs a trifle more to do so. And this brings us to our favorite subject, the Blue Steel Razor. A barber may have in his shop a number of razors that will do fairly well, but if for a few dollars he can get a Blue Steel Razor that can always be kept in perfect condition, that will shave persons in the most satisfactory manner, is it not policy to buy it? The manufacture of Blue Steel Razors is superintended by men so well versed in this branch of science, who make it their greatest

aim to reach as near perfection as can be done, who employ the most skilful men, use the most carefully selected steel, and direct the greatest attention to tempering each blade, as well as the grinding; every razor being full concaved or hollow ground, which every barber knows is as important a factor in a razor as the metal itself. Combining all these important points makes the Blue Steel Razor truly a marvel of workmanship, so that it can justly be termed: "A Prince" among razors. Considering all this, is it not economy to pay the slight advance charged for it over ordinary razors? Especially if one thinks of the satisfaction the best tools always give to the man in his profession. For such instruments not only produce a pleasing effect on the occupant of the chair, but save much time to the barber as they require so little care and attention. The accompanying cut on page 10 gives but a faint idea of the Blue Steel Razor, for like all articles of true merit, it "must be seen to be appreciated."



**BLUE STEEL.**—"The best Razor in the world." This razor, as the name implies, is manufactured from the best blue steel, perfectly tempered and ground. Blue Steel Razors, as all barbers are aware, are the finest for all purposes, and especially serviceable in cases where a heavy beard is to be shaved. This razor combines all qualities of usefulness. Blue Steel Razors are our own manufacture, and the secrets to their production are held exclusively by us. Beware of imitations. Kept in 4-8, 5-8, 6-8 and 7-8 sizes.

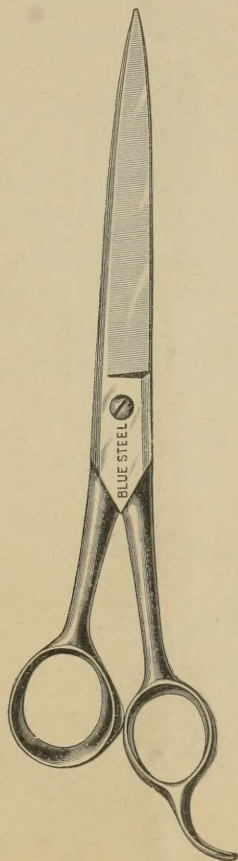
Black Handle-----each, \$3 00	Ivory Handle-----each, \$3 50
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## BLUE STEEL SHEARS.

What we have said of the preparation of the Blue Steel Razors holds good also of our Blue Steel Shears. Every barber knows the value of good shears. The cut on page 11 endeavors to show the Blue Steel Shears.

"BLUE STEEL" — All steel — hand forged — "The best Barber Shears in the market."



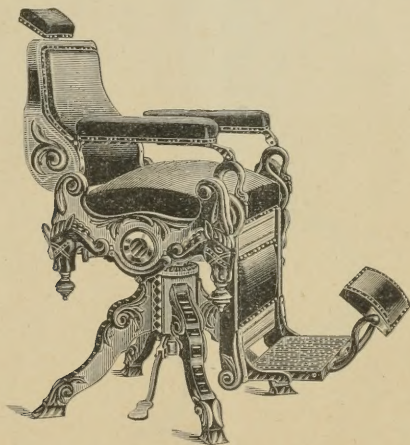
	Black Handle.	Nickel-Plated Handle.	Black Handle.	Nickel-Plated Handle.
7 -inch-----	\$1 25	\$1 35	8½-inch-----	\$1 75
7½-inch-----	1 40	1 50	9 -inch-----	1 85
8 -inch-----	1 50	1 60	9½-inch-----	2 00

**"TO SEE OURSELVES AS OTHERS SEE US."**

What a pleasing effect it makes on one to get into a barber's chair where he can rest with comfort while being shaved or having his hair cut, can be better experienced by the customers than by the barber. Could barbers always know the good effect this produces they would not object to the slight cost to get the best chairs. The following cut shows our Eclipse Chair, but our catalogue for 1893 gives a complete list of them and will be mailed on application.

It would be useless to undertake a detailed description of our chairs in this limited space, nor can the illustration convey any idea of its convenience and beauty of finish. Briefly stated, the Eclipse Chairs combine ingenuity of design, solidness of construction, beauty of finish, and embrace all the latest improvements that experience and careful study could suggest. Made either of Walnut or Antique Oak.

We make this Chair in four different styles, ranging in price from \$28 to \$60 each.



**ECLIPSE CHAIRS.**  
(BEST ON EARTH.)





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